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ACTION ARA-20

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 2691

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, AR

SUBJECT: GOA APPEARS TO HOLD TO MODERATE COURSE

REF: 1. BA 1942, 2. BA 2398, 3. BA 2358, 4. BA 2337

5. BA 2526, 6. BA 2525

1. SUMMARY. WHILE WORD "MODERATE" MAY APPEAR SOMEWHAT OUT OF CONTEXT IN CURRENT ARGENTINE SCENE, GIVEN WORSENING CLIMATE OF VIOLENCE HERE, FACT IS THAT GOVERNMENT ITSELF SEEMS TO HAVE SWUNG BACK TOWARDS CENTRIST-MODERATE POSITIONS IN WAKE OF CORDOBA CRISIS. END SUMMARY

2. WHILE IT IS TOO EARLY TO DRAW ANY HARD AND FACT CONCLUSIONS, THE CORDOBA CRISIS OF SIX WEEKS AGO DOES NOT APPEAR TO HAVE RESULTED IN A TURN TO THE RIGHT ON THE PART OF THE GOA AS SOME HAD FEARED; ON THE CONTRARY, THERE IS CONSIDERABLE EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST IT HAS LED TO THE OPPOSIT REACTION -- E.E. A SWING BACK TOWARDS THE CENTER--, AS MODERATE PERONISTS HAD HOPED IT WOULD (SEE BA 1942). WITH SOME EXCEPTIONS, THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN HEWING CLOSELY TO A MODERATE LINE SINCE

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CORDOBA. THIS IS APPARENT IN ITS POST-CRISIS HANDLING OF THE

SITUATION IN CORDOBA ITSELF. RATHER THAN MOVING TO CONSOLIDATE RIGHT-WING GAINS THERE, THE INTERVENTOR, DULLIO BRUNELLO, WITH PERON'S BACKING, HAS BEEN MOVING VERY EVEN-HANDEDLY. HE DID NOT GIVE THE RIGHT WING THE JOBS THEY WANTED ON THE PROVINCIAL CABINET AND HE HAS MADE NO MOVE TO INTERVENE THE PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE EVEN THOUGH LEFTIST ELEMENTS LAST WEEK OFFICIALLY GAINED CONTROL OF THE LOWER HOUSE BY VOTING OUT THE INCUMBENT ORTHODOX PRESIDENT, MARIO AGODINO, AND VOTING IN LINO VERDE TORRES, A MEMBER OF ATILIO LOPEZ' COMBATIVE LABOR SECTOR. BRUNELLO ALSO FIRED OR SENT INTO RETIREMENT OVER 200 MEMBERS OF THE PROVINCIAL POLICE WHO HAD SUPPORTED NAVARRO (SEE BA 2398).

3. PERON'S OWN POSITION, MOREOVER, HAS BEEN A DISAPPOINTMENT TO THE RIGHT WING. WHEN CORDOBA LABOR LEADERS OF THE ORTHODOX SECTOR COMPALINED TO HIM RECENTLY, HE, IN EFFECT, TOLD THEM THEY SHOULD ALLOW OUSTED LEFTISTS, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF A FEW SUCH AS AGUSTIN TOSCO, TO PLAY A PROPORTIONATE ROLE IN THE UNIONS. THERE WAS ROOM FOR ALL PERSUASIONS EXCEPT EXTREMISM, HE SUGGESTED. THE SUPERIOR COUNCIL OF THE PERONIST MOVEMENT ALSO TOOK A SLAP AT THE CORDOBA RIGHT WING WHEN ON APR 4 IT DISAVOWED THE SO-CALLED JUNTA DE CONDUCCION PARTIDARIA, A RIGHTIST GROUP WHICH HAD SUPPORTED NAVARRO. THE COUNCIL DESCRIBED THE JUNTA AS AN UNAUTHORIZED BODY AND ORDERED IT TO DISBAND IMMEDIATELY.

4. THE WAY IN WHICH THE PERONISTS ARE MOVING TO HANDLE THE SITUATIONS IN OTHER TROUBLED PROVINCES ALSO SUGGESTS A MORE MODERATE APPROACH THAN WAS USED ORIGINALLY IN CORDOBA. IN MENDOZA, LEGAL MEANS ARE BEING EMPLOYED AND IN SANTA FE AND SALTA THE RIGHT-WING LABOR LEADERS ARE NOT GETTING SUPPORT FROM OTHER SECTORS OF THE MOVEMENT IN PUSHING FOR CONTRONTATIONS WITH THE GOVERNORS (SEE BA 2358).

5. OTHER INDICATIONS OF A CENTRIST POSITION ARE LISTED BELOW:

A. COLONEL DAMASCO HAS RESUMED TALKS WITH THE LEFT WING OF THE PERONIST YOUTH--AT THE SAME TIME THAT THE SUPERIOR COUNCIL CONTINUES TO ATTACK THEM (SEE BA 2337).

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B. THE FOUR RIGHT-WING YOUTH REPRESENTATIVES ON THE SUPERIOR COUNCIL MAY BE REPLACED BY MORE MODERATE FIGURES (SEE BA 2526).

C. THE SUPERIOR COUNCIL ON MAR 28 DISAVOWED STATEMENTS MADE BY THE EXTREME RIGHT-WING PERONIS REVOLUTIONARY LEGION. THE LEGION HAD CALLED FOR STATE CONTROL OF THE PRESS AND ABOLITION OF POLITICAL PARTIES. THE COUNCIL

SAID SUCH STATEMENTS IN NO WAY REPRESENTED THE VIEWS OF THE PERONIST MOVEMENT AND THAT THE LEGION ITSELF WAS NOT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MOVEMENT.

D. MONTONERO LEADER MARIO FIZMENICH HAS BEEN RELEASED BY COURT ORDER BECAUSE OF INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE, AS WAS (ON APR 1) CARLOS ALBERTO CARIDE, WHO WAS ARRESTED SOME WEEKS BACK IN CONNECTION WITH A MUCH BALLYHOOED PLOT AGAINST PERON'S LIFE--A PLOT OF WHICH EVEN PERON HIMSELF MADE LIGHT. PROBABLY NEITHER CARIDE NOR FIRMENICH IS CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN PLANTING BOMBS OR OTHER ACTS OF VIOLENCE. THAT DOES NOT MEAN THEY MAY NOT BE ENGAGED IN THOSE ACTIVITIES IN THE NEAR FUTURE, HOWEVER. AT THE SAME TIME, THE FACT THAT THEY WERE RELEASED DOES SUGGEST THAT THE ARGENTINE COURT SYSTEM IS STILL WORKING.

E. FINALLY, PERON HAS, IF ANYTHING, PLACED EVEN MORE EMPHASIS SINCE THE CORDOBA CRISIS ON THE ONGOING DIALOGUE WITH THE OTHER PARTIES (SEE BA 2525) AND ON MAINTAINING CONSENSUS, A COURSE WHICH, BY DEFINITION, IMPLIES A MIDDLE-OF-THE-ROAD APPROACH.

6. THERE ARE SIGNS OF COUNTERVAILING CURRENTS. ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND SOME PARAMILITARY ACTIVITIES CONTINUE. THE CLOSING OF EL DESCAMISADO AND MILITANCIA, LEFTIST PERONIST PUBLICATIONS, WHILE PERHPAS DEEMED NECESSARY IN ORDER TO MINIMIZE INFLAMMATORY RHETORIC JUST BEFORE THE BIG MAY DAY FESTIVITIES, WAS CERTAINLY ONLY BARELY LEGAL--IF IN FACT IT WAS LEGAL AT ALL. THESE, AND OTHERS, HOWEVER, APPEAR TO BE EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULE WHICH MOST ARGENTINES ARE WILLING TO ACCEPT AS MATTERS OF NECESSITY GIVEN THE CURRENT SITUATION--BUT TO ACCEPT THEM ONLY SO LONG AS THEY ARE LIMITED AND ARE IN FACT EXCEPTIONS.

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7. THE REAL TEST OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ADHERENCE TO MODERATE POLICIES WILL COME WHEN (AND IF) ITS LONG-PROMISED ALL-OUT CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE TERRORISTS GETS OFF THE GROUND. SOME OVERZEALOUSNESS IS PROBABLY INEVITABLE AND THERE WILL DOUBTLESS BE A TENDENCY ON THE PART OF THE POLICE TO USE REPRESSIVE MEASURES. PERON MUST BE CAREFUL TO KEEP THE RIGHT-WING PERONISTS WHO WOULD LIKE TO EMPLOY EXTRA-LEGAL SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM IN LINE WHILE HE DEALS WITH LEFTIST EXTREMISTS. OTHERWISE, THE RIGHT WILL MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO EXPAND EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULE INTO SANCTIONED GOVERNMENT GUIDELINES AND MAKE AN ALREADY CYNICAL ARGENTINE PUBLIC EVEN MORE SO.

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